

# AIR, DIRT & INK

*A Boring Communications Publication*

Vol 1, Issue 5

December 1993 - January 1994

## **NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL NEWS:**

### **SANTA CLAUS EXPOSED!**

Trench, IND. During their Winter Caucus, the Indiana branch of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) made the unprecedented decision to expose Santa Claus. NAB spokesman, Eunice Festrang explained, "We decided that it was against our basic belief in 'Journalistic Objectivity' to continue to present 'News' stories that mislead America's youth into believing that that fat old man in a red suit at the mall is Santa Claus."

Unfortunately some NAB boosters have been taking the "Expose Santa" edict too literally. So far thirteen NAB (EXPOSED cont. page 12)

### **NOCTURNAL ADMISSIONS**

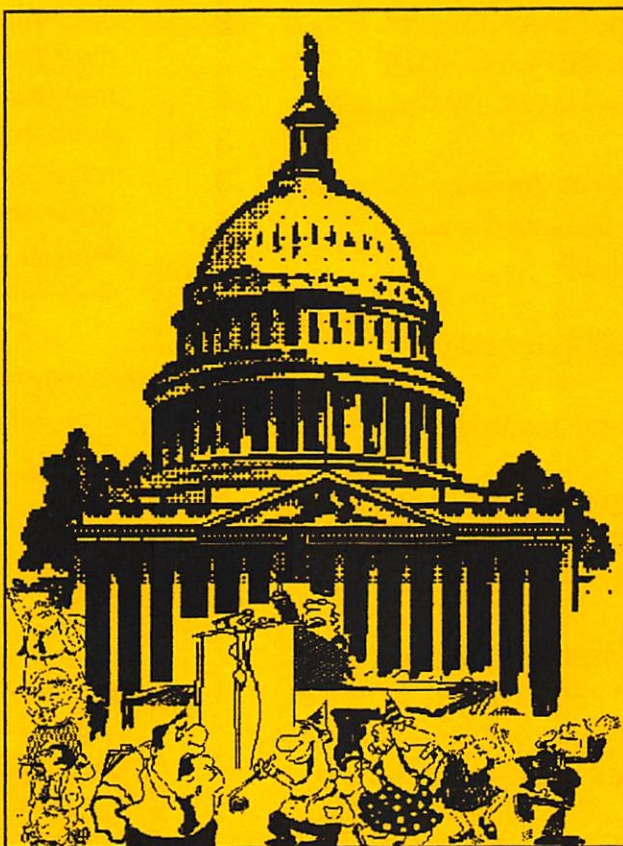
Washington, AC/DC. During the flurry of activity just before the Winter Break, Congress held a staggering number of all-night sessions. According to one Senator the all-night sessions weren't the only thing staggering. The Senator, who asked to not be identified (D- (CONGRESS cont. page 16)

### **HOMEMAKERS FIGHT BACK WITH H.A.F.T.A.**

Everly, NEB. Following Congressional and FCC hearings on violence and animal nudity on television, a group of suburban housewives protested that they were prevented from speaking at the hearings. Speaking on behalf of Homemakers' Association for Truth in

Advertising (HAFTA) former second-lady, Marilyn Quayle said that it was time for the "Media Elite" to pay attention to the second largest viewing audience between the ages of 34 and 37. Attending the noontime press-conference "CBS Evening News" co-anchor LaToya Jackson asked

Quayle if she did her own hair. Ms. Quayle fired back that "it was just this lack of respect" that her group intends to address. Jackson replied that a simple "Yes/No" answer would have sufficed. Quayle then presented a 45-point plan to bring the National Media back to "decency and wholesome values." Less than three-minutes into Quayle's 55-minute presentation the reporters from the major networks and cable outlets left the proceedings. [ADI]



**Commotion Outside the Capitol Building**

**AIR, DIRT & INK** "Airing opinions, kicking up Dirt and wasting a lot of ink!!!"

A Boring Communications publication (a division of Last Minute Production).

**Vol. 1, Issue 5**

**Dec 1993 - Jan 1994**

Editor/Publisher: ..... Joseph Bustillos  
Financial Guru: ..... Gibran X  
National/International Editor: ..... Mary Us  
Entertainment Editor: ..... Ann Sundry  
Fitness correspondent: ..... Will Peabody

## Table of Contents

### THE NEWS

Santa Clause Exposed! .....	1
Nocturnal Admissions .....	1
Homemakers Fight Back with HAFTA .....	1
Jackson Says Beat It to Super Bowl Repeat .....	2

### FEATURES: ADI HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS

"Ultimate Unpopular Holiday Tunes" by Creagan McConnell .....	3
"Next Year Will Be Different" by Jennifer Jackson ...	3
"The Christmas Legacy" by Pauline Curtis .....	5
"The Red Circle Readers Club" by Matthew Bustillos .....	6
"The Gift of Cancer" by Sandi Gobroski. ....	7

### CHILDREN'S PAGE

"Briff's Gift: Dreams & Dad" by Joe Bustillos .....	4
---	---

### COLUMNS:

"THE PUBLISHER'S DRIBBLE" .....	2
"SEX AND THE SINGLE BRAIN CELL" .....	9
"THE EDITOR'S WILD HAIR" .....	13

Copyright 1993 by Joseph B.  
Bustillos, 17300 East 17th Street,  
Suite J-247, Tustin CA 92680. (714)  
832-7778, except where noted.



## THE PUBLISHER'S DRIBBLE

"Five-years in the making"—ugh, it's tough coming back after a five-year lay off (just ask McCo . . . er, MeatLoaf). But then some things just need to be done. Besides, we were getting too far into the 90's to not hear from the one literary voice that has always stood for "Journalistic Integrity" and "Rational Values." Unfortunately, New York's Newsday went belly-up a few years back so you're stuck with ADI. But, hey, at least we've continued our evolutionary process of employing a more graphical presentation in the rag (*translation*: if the writing sucks, at least the pictures are pretty to look at). Speaking of the writing, the number of contributing authors also continues to climb. And I for one, am happy to see the increased input (from some very unexpected sources too!). It just goes to show you the unexplored literary talent that's just wandering around out there. Special thanks to McConnell, Jackson, Curtis, and Matt Bustillos for their first time contributions (and they met the deadline without any threats--- simply amazing). And special prayers for Gobroski in her continued battle against cancer and for adding some soul to this endeavor. Thanks. Look for a possible St.Patty's/Easter issue. *JB*

### Jackson Says Beat It to Super Bowl Repeat

A spokesperson for former music Superstar Michael Jackson reported that the "Latex-Gloved One" (formerly known as the King of Pop) said that he would not be making a repeat appearance at the 1994 Super Bowl to be held in Atlanta, GA. When NFL officials were asked who they would replace Jackson with they reportedly said, "Michael who?" [ADI]

## **FEATURES: ADI HOLIDAY REFLECTIONS:**

### **ULTIMATE UNPOPULAR HOLIDAY TUNES**

**by Creagan McConnell**

[ed. note: KSBR DJ, Creagan McConnell applies his encyclopedic knowledge to lift up our normally lifeless Christmas listening]

**The** malls are alive with the sound of music, or more precisely at this time of year Christmas Music. People shopping, people shuffling and people swearing to the same old tired tunes as in years past. The familiar sounds of the Holiday season are welcome at first, but after the fifth or sixth trip to the over-decorated stores there is only so much of Bing's "White Christmas" or anyone's "Jingle Bells" that even the most spirited of us can take (especially after Bab's hyper-speed version of "Jingle Bells"). So forget the "perfect peacefulness" of Christmas Muzak or the deafening delightfulness of traditional sing-along-without-thinking songs. I have selected the "Ultimate Unpopular Holiday Tunes" list for those of you who want something unique rather than routine to fill your ears, minds, and yes, holiday spirit. Most stores, being interested in lifting your holiday dollars from your pocket, would not risk playing these songs. People

might get offended or worse, they might stop shopping to listen to the music. That would never do.

While the tunes selected may not always be in good taste, they were chosen for their "Holiday Fun Potential."



"YOU'RE LOOKING FOR THE TRUE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS, BUY THIS ALBUM. THEN BY ALL MEANS, KEEP LOOKING."

No malice should be inferred by this selection by any person or groups of persons. For these and many other unmentioned reasons, here are a few alternative holiday music selections. Some humorous, some outlandish and yes, dare we say, some thought provoking (which thoughts provoked are entirely up to the reader).

Casually dropping Holiday gift hints is the first and most important of the many Holiday chores. Remember, they'll be much more satisfied if they know that the present they give you is  
**(HOLIDAY cont. page 12)**

### **NEXT YEAR WILL BE DIFFERENT!!!**

**by Jennifer Jackson**

[ed. note: Harried Holiday hopeful succumbs to pressure, er I mean pleasure of the season]

**Every** year at Christmas time I go through the same damn ritual. I vow not to send cards, not to over decorate, not to over indulge, and to drastically reduce the number of people on my Christmas list—yeah, right. After all, we are in the 90's, where *frugal* is *vogue*. And then there's the part where every year I ask my spouse what he wants for Christmas. A nondescript answer is what I get, so he ends up getting underwear, socks or some other "necessity." About December 7th, when the first Christmas cards start to arrive, I start to panic. "Just a few cards," I said to myself, "just to the people who live far away." Of course that good intention swiftly collapsed as I went into guilt overdrive. So I spent 45 minutes in line at the post office because I just had to get the special Christmas stamps. OK.

As for the shopping, well, this year, spouse tells me that his *only* wish in life is to receive the *Super-Duper Hyper-Drive Fax Modem with chrome-molly handlebars*, as  
**(NEXT YEAR cont. p. 15)**

# **An ADI SPECIAL: THE CHILDREN'S PAGE**

## **"Briff's Gift: Chapter 1 - Dreams & Dad"**

by Joe Bustillos

[ed. note: I had originally hoped to have my niece follow up on her "The Adventures of Mellisa" story which she wrote for this journal when she was a ten-year-old. But I guess she lost interest after waiting over five-years to do the follow up. Oh well. Thus you, the brave ADI readers, are treated to the following excerpt of a work in progress. Early Reviewers have commented that the piece is not quite in the tradition of most children's literature (which shouldn't surprise the "typical" ADI reader). So this one qualifies as a bit of "Children's Prose" only in that it is fit for a parent to read to the young reader. You wouldn't want me to do something normal now would you? (Come on, check the characters' names).]

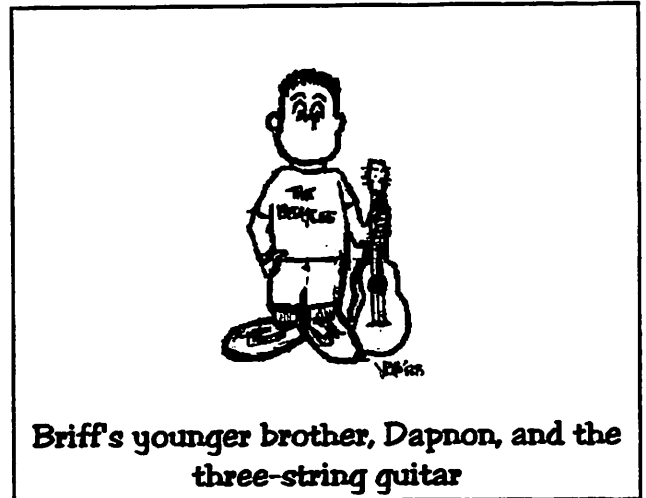
**A grey** early morning silence hung over the boys' bedroom like someone had dropped a bomb on the place. A depression sat in the middle of the room forming a crater between the two unkept beds. In the center of the crater lay a mixed up jumble of scattered plastic cars and abandoned army men. An unnatural apocalyptic stillness filled the room with deathly quiet and lifelessness and concealed the complete chaos that normally swirled about this place.

All that remained of the former chaos were the almost imperceptible noises that quietly rose from the two beds. Like thin aural ribbons of smoke, the twin sounds wafted upward into the otherwise still morning air. If this had been a real battlefield even these small sounds would have put their owners at deep/grave risk. But as it were the noises were just the nocturnal mumbling of two young boys fighting off the urges to wake up.

Ten-year-old Briff, safely buried under his bedspread, scowled. In his dream he was trying to remember where he had left his dad's pick ax. His younger brother, Dapnon, could not be compelled to have concerns more serious than the location of various lost plastic army men. Briff occasionally dreamed about army men, but his usual on-going nocturnal soap opera involved being at work with his dad, wearing his father's boots and heavy gloves and big leather tool-belt.

Briff smiled as he gripped the ax. He then dreamed that he and his dad, like a couple of long-time school buddies, were returning home after a long day at the construction site. Together they stomped their big work boots on the edge of the porch and sent clumps of mud to the gravelly ground. Briff could smell the earth in his hair and feel the soil under his finger nails.

Dirty brown water raced down his arms and into the white bathroom sink as he vigorously washed his hands before going to eat dinner. He sat on the toilet seat and laboriously unlaced his work boots. When he got to the kitchen, his father was calling to him from the front yard.



**(BRIFF continued on page 18)**

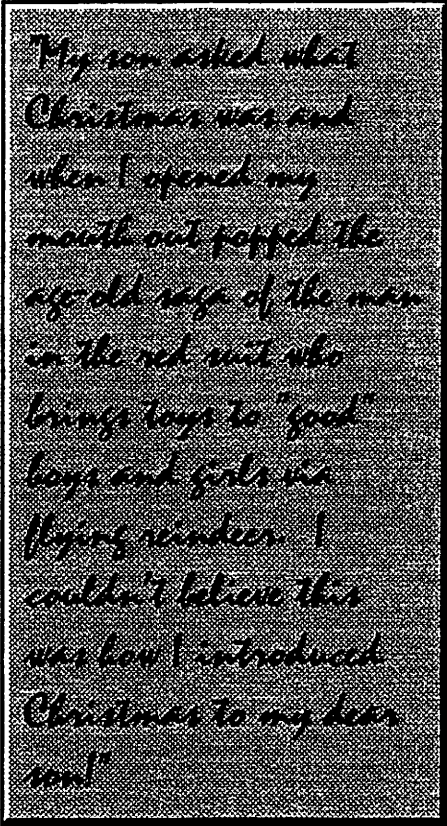
# 99¢ "The Christmas Legacy"

by Pauline Curtis

**Every** Christmas I watch my family shower their children with presents. Year after year the kids receive more toys than they can even play with. And we're not talking simple board games, but the high-tech, remote control, nintendo-type stuff. In fact this year my sister is giving her two boys, ages seven- and four-years-old, their very own portable color television! I have seen my nieces and nephews literally rip into the wrapping of a great toy and then cast it aside eager to devour the next one—their eyes frightfully glazed and the barest hint of drool along the edges of their greedy little mouths. Over the years I have vowed that when I had children I would not over-indulge them. I wanted them to appreciate the gifts as well as the spirit of the season. Well, the moment of truth has arrived! I am now the mother of two boys, ages two-years and five-months respectively. I was ready. I knew what values I wanted to instill. I knew my children would not see Christmas as one big toy-fest. And then it happened.

My son asked what Christmas was and when I opened my mouth out popped the age-old saga of the man in the red suit who brings toys to "good" boys and girls via flying reindeer. I couldn't believe this was how I introduced Christmas to my dear son! As

a parent, I now see why it's easy to spoil your kids, to give them all the things that you never had. But I believe it was the not having "everything" that made me appreciate what I did have. (Not to mention to help nurture the imagination). I want to give my boys all the joy of the season that I



*"My son asked what Christmas was and when I opened my mouth out popped the age-old saga of the man in the red suit who brings toys to 'good' boys and girls via flying reindeer. I couldn't believe this was how I introduced Christmas to my dear son!"*

experienced. I want them to simply know the love of family, I want them to live the tradition of the Christmas of my youth, with my parents.

It seemed so important that there be something tangible to give my sons since they never had the chance to experience their grandparents' love firsthand. At first I

thought my parents didn't really pass on any concrete traditions. There was never a formal Christmas dinner, we didn't have any "special" ornaments, we never went Christmas caroling or had a Yule log (whatever that is). I looked back over my childhood Christmases and realized that most of the time my parents didn't even have gifts for us kids because there wasn't enough money. However, we always had a tree, my mom always decorated the house, we always had homemade tamales, and thanks to my working older brothers and sister, there were always some gifts under the tree. One special tradition that we had was the way we opened our presents.

Beginning with my mom or dad and traveling in a clockwise direction, each person would open one present while everyone else watched. In this way everyone enjoyed each others giving and getting. (It also made the process last all morning!) I remember on Christmas eve, my sister and I would lie in bed, too excited to sleep, and sing Christmas carols all night long. The feeling seems too vague for words but in my heart it's as fresh as it was on those nights over twenty years ago.

(LEGACY cont. page 18)

# "Red Circle Reader Club"

by Matthew B. Bustillos

[ed. note: It probably started when he was a ten-year-old clutching a clandestine copy of Mad Magazine. Or maybe it was even earlier when he was eight and didn't understand why mom was upset that he was reading Love Story (besides, it was only the Reader's Digest version, for god's sakes). Thus, my younger brother, Matthew "Bozo" Bustillos, has become a avid reader and knows of what he speaks when he writes about being clandestine bathroom reading. This is not exactly a "Christmas article" but it could be a good guide to gift getting for that bathroom reader in your life.]

**People** who are readers are a different breed. They usually can be spotted clutching some reading material at all times. They read at lunch time, while standing in line at the DMV or fast food restaurants and they most definitely read in the bathroom. You can tell a lot about a person by the reading material near their toilet. I'm a bathroom reader. And a food reader. I have a difficult time eating or sitting on the toilet if I don't have something to read. As a child I used to read various boxes and packages that were kept in our bathroom. That's how I learned about tampons as a kid. If a person spends only 10-minutes a day sitting on the toilet, over a lifetime that is almost half a year. Since we spend so much of our lives in the bathroom it would seem that it is important that we spend our time filled with good rich growing experiences rather just flushing . . . well, you know. This article will help to explain what makes for good bathroom reading.

First let's start with the bathroom itself. A warm, well-lit, well-ventilated bathroom is important. I like bathrooms that have a fan in them. Not just for the ventilation (a real must) but to drown out any distractions from my "private time." Fan noise makes it easy to feign deafness to anyone beckoning.

"Sorry hon', I couldn't hear you. The fan was on."

The toilet seats is also pretty important. I found this out when I tried to replace our previous toilet seat with a cheap plastic model. It was a cheap design and the edges were a little sharper than I am used to. It left a painful crease on my buttocks after sitting on it for only



**Matt in his favorite reading position.**

a couple of minutes. Not good. And while cushioned seats are comfortable, they always feel warm when I first sit on them. I get uncomfortable when I sit on a toilet that is still warm from the previous user.

The bathroom itself should not be the one that is most heavily used. Persistent knocking can be so bothersome when trying to read. In the bathroom that I enjoy most I have a nice bookrack. Bookracks are better than wicker baskets when the magazines are stacked flat. You usually end up reading the one that is on top and only when you clean up all the magazines do you realize that there was a whole group of magazines that you haven't read yet.

**(RED continued on page 15)**

# "The Gift of Cancer: Sometimes it Takes a Prognosis of Death To Find the Will To Live" by Sandi Albertsen Gobroski<sup>1</sup>

[ed. note: When last we heard from Sandi she had only one last name and was trying to gently dissuade a young musician that perhaps it wasn't "God's will" for her to marry him. Having "successful" managed that crisis we now find our young writer, married to a "Mr. Right" of her choosing, contending with another crisis of an entirely different magnitude. Holy Existentialism, Batman!]

**"Your** test results are back and I'll tell you up front, the news isn't good, okay?"

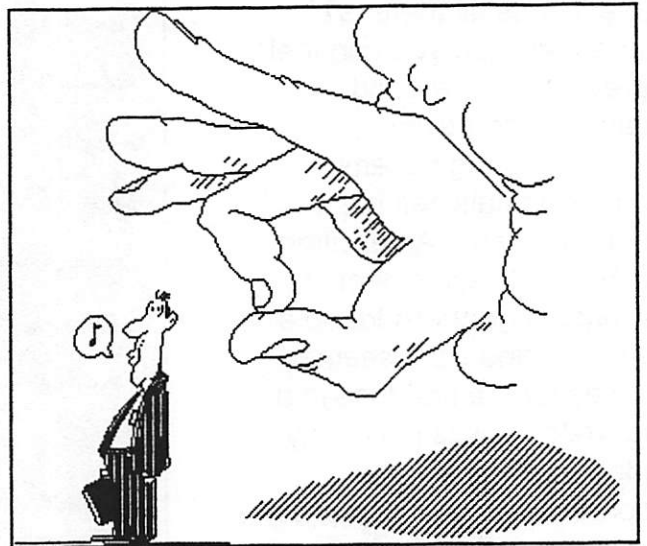
As the surgeon's receptionist scheduled a consultative appointment for the following afternoon, I stared at the phone in disbelief. After two weeks of endless annoying tests designed to diagnose a slight swelling in my armpit, the one verdict I hadn't suspected was the one that had come back: aggressive metastasized cancer of unknown origin, probably breast. *My God, I thought, I'm 35. I'm healthy. My lifestyle is safe and boring. They told me this kind of thing just doesn't happen to someone like me.*

The receptionist offered her sympathy. I reassure her with bravado, insincere but well-intentioned. There would be a lot of that in the weeks to come. Bravado, I would discover, is a valuable coping mechanism. It plays well with shock and denial. And it balances nicely with those messy middle-of-the-night convulsive sob sessions that would wring grief from me like an over-spent sponge.

That fateful phone call had come October 14, 1993. Two weeks and a flurry of consultations later, I checked into the University of Washington Hospital and Medical Center in Seattle, where America's finest in the cancer and plastic surgery businesses sliced me, diced me and put me back together better than before. The mastectomy and reconstruction took 11-1/2 hours, yielding 11 cancerous lymph nodes in addition to some breast tissue doctors thought "might be" the primary site (Hearing your surgical oncologist say "We're hoping we got the source" is like hearing your son's circumcisor say, "Whoops!").

Of the eight days I spent in the hospital, four of them had me immobilized in a "lounge chair" position, playing with my self-administered morphine pump and musing over what a convoluted year I'd had. I flashed back to December 1992, pleading with my family doctor for a Prozac prescription because I'd realized my depression had reached the point where I was planning my "accidental" death.

Thoughts of suicide weren't new to me. I had struggled most of my life with the demons that  
(CANCER continued on page 8)



<sup>1</sup>Copyright 1993 Sandi Albertsen Gobroski - Gobroski Communications

**(CANCER continued from page 7)**

haunt individuals too sensitive and idealistic for their own good. But after five-years of marriage, step-children, financial pressures and the like, I'd learned it's a lot easier to handle angst while starving solo in a turret somewhere. Life had become a series of have-tos and emotional standoffs, leaving very little left over.

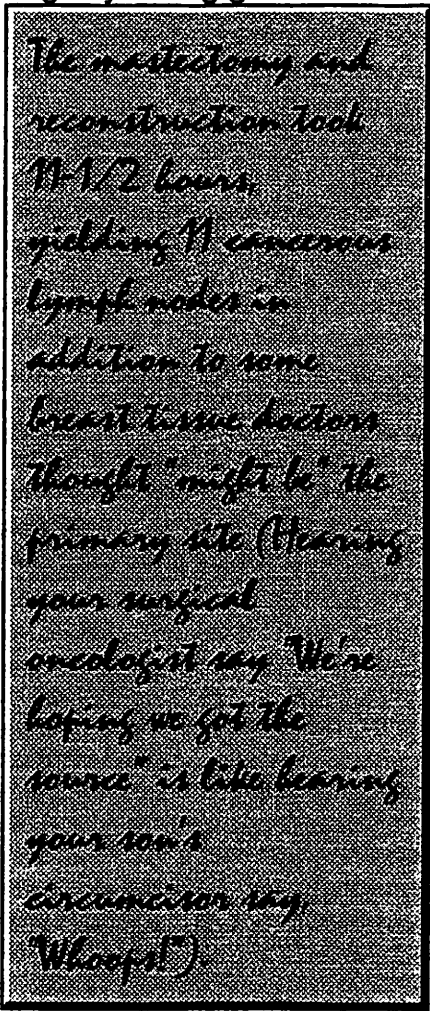
I took Prozac for six months, then quit because I had begun to feel evened out but somehow hallowed out. I was coping, but something inside had died. I found myself thinking, "Now that I'm stable, is this all there is?" After all, at least you can feel depression. It's a good catalyst for creativity.

As Spring became Summer, I finally felt hope rising within me. An exciting new book project took me to the wilds of northern Idaho a few times, and work seemed like play for the first time in a long while. I was hitting my stride, gaining on some important goals. The depression began to lift at last. Sure, I had some big-time personal issues to work through, but those looked a lot less intimidating when getting up in the morning didn't take a major act of will power.

And now, just as life was looking sweeter than it had in a long time, I was looking down the barrel of a one-in-two chance that I just might get that death wish

after all. Damn.

Suddenly I realized what an out-of-touch fool I'd been. I wanted life. Wanted it so bad I could feel the breeze of the calendar pages flipping frantically by. And now, I resolved, I would make up for my previously cavalier attitude with all the fight I could muster from my vaguely Viking genes.



*The mastectomy and reconstruction took 11 1/2 hours, yielding 11 cancerous lymph nodes in addition to some breast tissue doctors thought "might be" the primary site (Hearing your surgical oncologist say "We're hoping we got the source" is like hearing your son's circumcisor say "Whoops!").*

While my U. W. health team put together an aggressive, year-long protocol for chemotherapy, radiation therapy an in-hospital stays (part of an ongoing clinical study they're conducting to

prevent recurrence), my husband and I threw ourselves into learning everything we could about the "other" weapons in the war on cancer: nutritional, psychological, et cetera. As a direct result of such proactivity, I believe, my physical and mental health continues to baffle doctors, friends, and business associates. I was back at work a week after being released from the hospital. My white cell count is four times that of other chemo patients at this stage of therapy. I've only thrown up once (coincidentally, when half the rest of the family had the stomach flu). And four days out of seven I actually feel somewhat normal.

With mortality, I suppose, comes insight. In the two months since my diagnosis I've come to realize that cancer may ultimately be one of the best things that's ever happened to me. Being forced to face the external disease head-on is empowering me to achieve the inner healing that years of therapy and self-help weren't able to accomplish. And that, in a convoluted way, is a gift.

To a writer, cancer is like a deadline. Without deadlines, we scribes tend to doodle and procrastinate indefinitely, fearing that what we put on paper will be less than perfect. But living with cancer forces you to live life  
**(CANCER cont. page 20)**

# **"Sex & The Single Brain Cell: Endings & Assorted Bumpy Beginnings"**

by Joe Bustillos

[ed. note: The amazing coincidence that I would find myself bringing back ADI and this column just after the end of a long-term relationship may not be lost on some. It was lost on me. And Thus we begin with an Ending . . . ]

**"HE DEALS THE CARDS AS A MEDITATION  
AND THOSE HE PLAYS NEVER SUSPECT  
HE DOESN'T PLAY FOR THE MONEY HE WINS  
HE DOESN'T PLAY FOR RESPECT  
HE DEALS THE CARDS TO FIND THE ANSWER  
THE SACRED GEOMETRY OF CHANCE  
THE HIDDEN LAW OF PROBABLE OUTCOME  
THE NUMBERS LEAD A DANCE."  
"SHAPE OF MY HEART" BY STING**

August 4, 1993 2:04 a.m.

**There's** a certain brutality to way relationships convulse when they die. Even when the post-mortem has been vehemently confessed and signed, the unexpected shudder breaks through the emotional defenses and reminds one of what once was. I knew this, but there's nothing quite like getting a face full of it to remind oneself of this truth. Tonight, oh tonight . . . it began at aerobics with one of the instructors teasing me about one of my students being my girlfriend, or perhaps wanting to be my girlfriend. Ugh. Then, a long-absent, young soon-to-be-married good Catholic "friend" with a wonderfully "healthy" figure, showed up at my class. Why do I do this to myself? Blah, blah, blah—I was coping but not very gracefully.

The final act of the evening was to swing by my former live-in love's place to drop off her mail. In recent weeks (months?) the woman had not been at her place of residence when I have made these little mail drops (including one early Sunday morning!?). Nonetheless, it became pretty much routine. So, imagine my

surprise when I pulled up in front of her place and saw that her lights were on. Ha, as great a surprise as that might have been it was nothing compared to the surprise I received when a rather tall gentleman with an undone belt buckle answered the door.

There was only a "small delay" before she showed up at the door. Actually, upon reflection, besides the shock of finding me at the door, she seemed relatively unfazed (no telltale signs of being out-of-breath). Fortunately I had the letters to thrust into her hands to distract our attention away from what might have been painful or embarrassing explanations. When I asked how she'd been she offered that summer school had just finished that night and weakly added something about "moving on with life." Moving on indeed.

With the tall one doing something in the kitchen she said that she needed to get back to dinner. Umm, yeah. I then realized that I was still standing at the door, actually having taken a few steps back. It took less than a micro-

**(SEX continued on page 10)**

**(SEX continued from page 9)**

second for me to figure out that she was not going to ask me to come in (not that I had any particular need to enter the residence). Now standing a good five to eight feet apart we said our hug-less good-byes and I turned to walk down the steps to the parking lot. I decided somewhere between the steps and my car that I would not be making any more return trips to personally drop off her mail.

**O**n the drive home I tried to evaluate how I felt about this little surprise encounter. I found it hard to not project beyond what I had actually seen, to the events that might have transpired before my arrival or the meaning behind all of this. Not too surprising considering that the only "explanation" was something about moving on with life. I think I was just in a general state of shock (which hasn't entirely left me yet, it now being five hours later). I had just told a friend that the difficulty I was having with my break-up was not in the thought of her going out or being with other men but in the separation, the loss of communication and affection. I wisely added that all of this was hypothetical, having no idea how I would actually react should she take up with another. I guess that's no longer a fucking hypothetical situation.

In the same discussion with my friend I confessed that I had become angry with my former love. It wasn't a continual state. These were simmering feelings that just hung on the edge whenever her mail would end up in my box or whenever I would rethink disagreements that had come between us. And I resented the loss of affection in my life because of all of this. These were relatively simple feelings. My friend asked what I was doing with these feelings. Honestly I didn't know that there was much that I could do with them. So, now that I have personally faced my replacement, what am I feeling? Just a little . . . lonely . . . and a little sad over what we have lost.

I could feel myself being pulled in the direction of thinking about her physically being

with this man, giving herself to him, but there was no point compounding the sense of loss that I already know.

Granted, I have no idea what significance this person may have to her, if any (besides symbolizing "moving on with life"), but there is more than a little irony here. That is, after all of her rantings and ravings about giving up on men or on ever wanting to start another relationship should our relationship finally collapse, I should find her "entertaining" someone in her apartment (fuck the "entertaining," he seemed comfortable enough in her kitchen to call the word "housekeeping" to mind!). And here, I've been leery about having anyone over to my place because I don't want to start something. What was I thinking? I guess it doesn't help that my current faithful female companions are either married or are not the ones I really want to start something with. If anything, my former love has never been known for staying in one place for too long. So, I guess she is moved on. Goodbye, my love.

I KNOW THAT THE SPADES  
ARE SWORDS OF A SOLDIER  
I KNOW THAT THE CLUBS  
ARE WEAPONS OF WAR  
I KNOW THAT DIAMONDS  
MEANS MONEY FOR THIS ART  
AND IF I TOLD YOU THAT I LOVED YOU  
YOU'D MAYBE THINK  
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG  
I'M NOT A MAN OF TOO MANY FACES  
THE MASK I WEAR IS ONE  
"SHAPE OF MY HEART" - STING

**October 25, 1993**

**S**he deftly hopped the center gear shift console of her car and added a full-body press to her shower of kisses to me. I must have inadvertently hit some turbo-kissing button on her person. Only hours before, while we sat in a darkened theater, I was evaluating whether to  
**(SEX continued on page 11)**

(SEX continued from page 10)

put my arm around her. And just as I was contemplating how things had progressed over the past few hours, turbo-kissing mode ended (the oriental lovely suddenly became self-conscious and hopped back to her side of the car). Welcome to dating in the 90's.

When last we left our hero he was licking his wounds from a prior long-term relationship gone awry. So how is it that he would now be the recipient of the energetic affection of his lovely companion? I don't know. I just asked (amazing how that works).

To begin with, I generally don't ask out women with whom I haven't had a friendship with first but this time I departed from the norm. Thus the lovely smiling face in my aerobics class became my kissing companion. Now how do I compress the rest of this into some sort of meaningful prose? The first date of lunch and movies began at noon and didn't end until eleven-thirty when I had to go to work. To say that she and I seemed to click would be a proverbial understatement. But . . . well there were more than a few potholes on this road to relationship bliss.

First there was the age thing. Among the factoids exchanged during the first date was that this young woman was indeed young. Contrary to the social stereotype about older men and younger women, I've always associated with women right around my own age group. Finding my 35-years-old self attracted to this 23-year-old was extraordinarily out of this person's usual realm of familiarity (*but I could learn*). And then there was a certain "racial" question. The question was not for me, mind you, but I was informed that a certain young lady's traditional Korean parents might not think too kindly of her association with yours truly. And just in case there was some doubt that this was becoming a truly Romeo & Juliet tale, yes there were some potential religious conflicts. Other than that, everything was great. Oh yeah, as a flight attendant she spent most of her weekends in the air and I, with my night

(SEX cont. page 22)

## EXCURSUS:

### ONE SMALL SCARE ...

Recently the Discovery Channel ran a documentary on the early years of the AIDS crisis (the information upon which the book and the film, *And the Band Played On*, is based). I'd been "channel surfing" when I stumbled upon the last hour or so of it. I found myself gripped by the horror and tragedy of the story.

*I remember* sitting in a Physical Anthropology class at CSUF. It was 1986, my wife and I were in the process of separating, and the professor in the class was explaining the life and death realities of sex and the absolute necessity of using a condom. She passed out a condom in the classroom as she spoke. Most of the kids giggled. Several of the girls refused to touch the thing. I was horrified and angered in the same moment. At a time when I was about to leave the "safety of marriage," I found that the whole singles world had entered a very deadly sexual Armageddon. And it was the giggling and immaturity of some of my classmates which was going to end some of their lives and put the rest of us at risk. But then I shouldn't take these kids to task. It would seem, based on the scenario presented in the film, that all of the people who could have made a difference in the Reagan administration failed to make a difference.

At a time when responsibility and some rational plans of attack were needed, the folks in Washington fell back on Platitudes and Moralizing. Of course, they weren't alone in failing us. The gay men who know that they were infected but continued to have unprotected sex certainly contributed to the firestorm. It was a failure to act responsibly all around. But Washington's belief (some might say "hope") that the disease was a "gay thing" speaks most clearly about how we fail ourselves when we let our prejudices dictate our actions and somehow try to sound "moral" in the process.

The woman I had started seeing was very interested in going down and getting tested together (after several dates, it's one sure way to tell who's responsible and who's not). But after last night's film I think a monastery or ashram might be more appropriate. I should have known something was up when Hugh Hefner got married. [ADI]

**(EXPOSED from page 1)**

members have been arrested in a half dozen malls throughout the greater Indianapolis area for "Causing a public disturbance" and for tearing the wigs, fake beards and clothing from the unsuspecting Santas, according to one mall security person. One shaken Santa said, "It's bad enough that we have to listen your slobbering materialistic tykes. Now a bunch of you fascist news-people have nothing better to do than to come down here and literally rip the shirts off our backs. Do you know how much this damn suit costs?!"

At one suburban mall several parents, with children waiting to see Santa, attacked the NAB members after the members had reduced that Santa to his BVDs. The parents were said to have pummeled the NAB members with shopping bags while shouting, "How dare you ruin our kids Christmas!" and "Christmas is for the kids!" The NAB members and Santa were glad when Mall Security finally arrived to quell the melee. One of the members arrested was a local sportscaster and obvious "Hair Club for Men" member. When contacted for comment NAB spokesman, Eunice Festring, only had one thing to say: "Never Mind!" [ADI]

**(HOLIDAY continued from page 3)**

appreciated. (And if you want to know what to get me, just call 714-582-3458—this number is good for Birthdays and Christmas. Is that thoughtful or what?). In the tradition of Spike Jones' 1947 recording, "All I want for Christmas is My Two Front Teeth" is the first number in our Ultimate Unpopular Holiday Tunes List: 50's child star, Gayla Peevey's "I WANT A HIPPOPOTAMUS FOR CHRISTMAS" (1953). One can only wonder if this early bit of suggestive lyric was any less dangerous in its day than today's Beavis and Buttthead consternation. Probably not.

Next on our list is Eartha Kit's "SANTA BABY" (1953), which reached #4 on the charts (the highest ranking song on our list). What Peevey giggles about in "Hippopotamus" Kit asks for in her own sultry and sexy way in an era when it was truly dangerous to be suggestive (long before Madonna figured out that it'd be "cool" to wear her bra on the outside).

While some requests, like Peevey's or Kit's, might seem next to impossible to fulfill, the ladies in the group, The Bookends, make "CHRISTMAS KISSES" (1961) a wish almost too inviting not to deliver early and often (and they're not talking about the kind that come in foil wrappers . . . duh).

Without sounding overly pessimistic, for everyone finding their Christmas wish under the tree there will be a hell of a lot more who will come away feeling like Loretta Lynn in her 1966 ode "TO HECK WITH OLE SANTA CLAUS." Fifth on our list, Little Miss Dynamite, Brenda Lee continues Lynn's sentiments with "I'M GONNA LASSO SANTA CLAUS" (1956). Not getting what you wanted in your stockings is certainly not limited to the Ladies of Country. Check out Bob River's and Twisted Radio's "DIDN'T I GET THIS LAST YEAR?" (1993) where everyone gets exactly what they didn't want . . . again! But, perhaps the most dismayed of the unfulfilled is the rockabilly group, The Sonics in "DON'T BELIEVE IN CHRISTMAS" (1966).

Ouch! Someone call 9-1-1 for the Fat Dude in the red suit. Not everyone is pissed with Mr. Ho-Ho-Ho. What'ya say we celebrate the happiness of Santa with some dancing. Showing us the steps is the beautiful West Coast blues singer, Mabel Scott, with one of her biggest hits, "BOOGIE WOOGIE SANTA CLAUS." You may have never heard of this one, but if your toes aren't tappin' by the end then you better start CPR before it's too late. For those with a very specific taste in their  
**(HOLIDAY cont. page 16)**

# **"The Editor's Wild Hair: Religion in the Classroom"**

by Joe Bustillos

THERE'S A CALL TO US ALL  
TO LOVE ALL HUMANITY  
EVERY RACE ON THE FACE OF EARTH, COME TO UNITY  
"LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOU LOVE YOURSELF."  
THESE, THE MASTER'S WORDS, WOULD DO US WELL  
BUT MAN'S BELIEF, RELIGIOUS CREEDS, CAN MAKE HIM BLIND  
THE NARROW WAY IS NOT A NARROW MIND.  
- TERI DESARIO\*

**Maybe** Marx was right when he said that religion is the opiate of the masses. But then one man's drug might be another man's reality.

My fundamentalist father and I had a boisterous discussion the other day about "the state of education." In the past my father's general arguments (true to his conservative roots) have centered around a need to return to the basics—reading, writing, arithmetic. But this time he wanted to know how my teacher training was going to address the *moral* needs and foundations of my students. Ouch, I wasn't ready for that one (I should have been—we've been having religious tussles since I was fifteen).

Some say that religion has no place in public education. That, however, would just confirm his belief that today's alleged moral decay is a direct result from God getting kicked out of school. The thing is I've been there before, I understand my father's concerns.

**S**ome folks say that people are predominantly evil, prone to do whatever you tell them not to do. That was why God's first big mistake, they say, was telling Adam and Eve not to eat that apple in the garden. Chances are that if he would have said nothing we'd still be in the garden. Such is fate.

**S**o Religion comes along and promises to straighten out something that it probably screwed up in the first place. Well, actually it probably isn't that simple. But they never tell you that when you sign on the dotted line. It's just a matter of faith, they say.

- **In Bad Faith\*\***

**But as much** as my father and others would like to return to the days when the "Our Father" was as big a part of the morning ritual in every elementary classroom as the "Pledge of Allegiance," those days are gone. That practice was based on the assumptions of the American Macroculture: "we're all White, Euro-centric, English-speaking, Male, Christian, 'Able-bodied', and middle-class, with a stable two-parent home-life in here, aren't we?" The assumption was that America's Elementary classrooms were predominantly populated by White Protestant children who believed in the words of the prayer. A cursory look at any current student population statistics

\* Teri DeSario, "A Call To Us All,"  
Dayspring Music, 1983.

\*\* Unpublished novel excerpt by yours truly  
(WILDHAIR continued on page 14)

**(WILDHAIR from page 13)**

would show that that assumption is thoroughly out of step with reality.

But to say that we are not "White, Euro-centric, English-speaking, Male, Christian, 'Able-bodied', and middle-class, with a stable two-parent home-life" is not the same as saying that we're all Atheists either. Thus, although the more common policy of refraining from "Religious Discussions" in the classroom is born out of a desire to avoid controversy (and those pesky legal entanglements) it is just as much out of step with Reality as the older policy of assuming we were all Protestants. In fact, if we were to revert to some sort of "Community Consensus" to determine acceptable "religious observances" I have to wonder how my Calvary Chapel brothers in Utah would feel if such a standard were used to justify daily reading of the Book of Mormon in the classroom. Or how would they feel, given the substantial Asian population in some parts of Orange County, if the daily reading came from Taoist literature? I would venture to guess that this would not be acceptable. Nonetheless, teaching Social Studies and History and Government and Philosophy and the Arts without discussions about Religion is a bit like teaching To Kill a Mockingbird without talking about racial prejudice.

So what do we do? The current policy is more a legal one than an educational one. Oh sure, there's a school of thought that says that you can break down Human Behavior to its component parts and work with the data a piece at a time. Understandably, this philosophy came from the Physical Sciences. Unfortunately (or fortunately), Humans do not grow in a vacuum like crystals. Every nuance, every experience, every element—biological-emotional-environmental contributes to the whole, acting and reacting with every other nuance, experience or element to make what we call Personality and Person. This is why discussions about "Nature" or "Nurture" are moot—you cannot have one without the other. Thus, removing Religion from the educational discussion is a bit like removing the proverbial

loose thread from the Tapestry of Human Experience—if the tapestry doesn't completely unravel than it is left with holes and gaps.

I guess in some ways my father was right, in that this policy has contributed in making us a generation disconnected Religiously from ourselves. Is it any wonder then that we fail to understand why the Catholics and Protestant in Ireland have been at each other's throats for decades, or the Christians and Muslims in Bosnia or the Jews and the Arabs in the Middle East. A century ago, Kierkegaard criticized his generation because they went to the theater expecting to be educated and went to church expecting to be entertained. One can only imagine the venom he would have for us with our years in front of the boob-tube and the unwillingness or inability of parents to talk with their own children. He might conclude that the religious consciousness has sucked from our collective skulls. Given such a picture, it makes perfect sense that our government's solution for a David Koresh would be an armed assault (besides, it made for great TV).

So then, how does one teach Morals or Ethics or Religion? What does the teacher do?

Rule number one: Begin from the prospective of the students in the classroom and community where the school is located. Teaching about the first Thanksgiving to a classroom predominantly populated by first generation Asian students might be meaningless without talking about the concept of Thanksgiving in the Asian cultures. The policy of the prior generation made the mistake of assuming that we all grew up in the same neighborhood. The error of the current policy tends to be the assumption that whatever happens outside of the classroom is unimportant to the educational process. Or, if it is taken into consideration it is spoken in terms of the unfortunate student's "disadvantage." Bullshit! "Advantage" or "disadvantage" tends to be a matter of modern American marketing. Students and teachers can ill-afford these

**(WILDHAIR continued on page 17)**

**(RED continued from page 6)**

What are the criteria for good toilet reading material? First, it has to be fairly brief, or in the case of a book, divided into short chapters. Reading James Michener on the toilet would be a bad idea. He writes well, but with his long descriptive prose your legs would go to sleep long before you would get finished with a chapter. It is bad enough to suffer from the tell-tale sign of a red circle imprinted on your buttock after a brief read, but if you are reading long enough to suffer from neck pain or lower extremity numbness, it is time to flush and go (or visa versa). Newspapers, magazines articles, or short stories found in the anthologies are about the right length. I tried reading Victor Villasenor's Rain of Gold on the toilet. Let's just say that it left a lasting impression on me. Sometimes a book that is too good to put down is a bad thing.

Second, good bathroom reading material has to capture your attention quickly. If an item doesn't grab my attention in the first few paragraphs, I move on. Life is too short to be bored in the bathroom.

Third, the book has to be a fairly easy read. The person on the toilet is usually doing at least one other thing besides reading, so one's mental focus can shift from one end of the body to the other. This conflict with one's focus of attention usually lowers one's reading level.

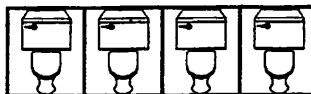
Lastly, large or heavy hardback books are difficult to manage on the toilet. There is enough straining going on in the bathroom without having to exert oneself to lift a heavy book. I usually read paperbacks while in the restroom.

Why do people read in the bathroom? Maybe it's the compulsiveness to stay busy even while eliminating waste products. Or, it could be an expression of curiosity or desire to learn. Another possibility is the seeking of diversion from an otherwise boring task. In my case I read in the bathroom because it is the only place that is quiet.

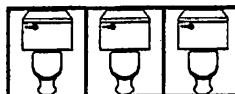
Starting next issue I will be reviewing four very different books:

- 1) The Art of Worldly Wisdom, Baltasar Gracian;
- 2) Drink Cultura-Chicanism, Jose Antonio Burciaga;
- 3) Little Birds, Anais Anin;
- 4) Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, Rober Persig.

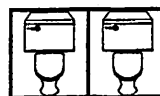
My rating system is as follows:



= Excellent (I laughed, I cried, I was moved)



= "Easily better than what's on TV right now", you'll stay on the toilet longer than usual



= Better than reading a tampon box



= can be used in lieu of toilet paper.

**[AD!]**

**(NEXT YEAR from page 3)**

he hands me the catalog where he saw it advertised. "It lists for \$239, but they have it on sale here for \$219!" he proudly proclaims. Uh huh. So I call the catalog place (we're now up to Dec. 15) and they tell me it's on back order until mid-January. Being the resourceful person that I am, I call a couple of computer stores in the area. They don't have it. I get smart and call the manufacturer. They have it on back order. I call four more mail order places that specialize in computers. The second place has 23 in stock! I weep for joy! But, I am advised by John, the helpful mail order clerk, they don't come with the cables or software. Hmmm. The last place I call (this is now December 20th) has two available, with cables and software! I'm so happy, I nearly order both of them!

Needless to say, I got the damn thing shipped overnight air, and I believe it will prove to be a happy Christmas all around . . . in spite of the ever-increasing Christmas card list, the negative balance in my checkbook, two maxed out VISA cards, the 10 extra pounds, and the stupid glitter I keep vacuuming up from the angels' hair. Next year it's back to Fruit of the Loom. And no cards! I swear!!! **[AD!]**

**(CONGRESS from page 1)**

MASS.), commented that more Senators were failing the sobriety check-points set up in the hallway outside the meeting chambers. "I wasn't too fond of the check-points myself at first, but this morning I nearly got side-swiped by the two Senators from California," he said.

When asked about the increased absenteeism, forgetfulness at the podium, and Senators wearing sunglasses in chambers, one Senator commented: "It's the damn season. Everybody wants something for nothing. The leaders say we should get done in these sessions all the stuff we failed to do during the preceding three-months. The wife is complaining that she's having to entertain our house-guests while I play "Ruler of the World." The kids want to go to Disneyland. My assistant keeps raising her price and my girlfriend says that she needs new furniture in her condo. You're not writing this down are you?!" he asked. "Shit, I need a drink," he said as he left. Several other Senators could be seen touching their noses and trying to walk a straight line. A few in handcuffs were being led away. One could be heard shouting at his armed-escort, "You should be out there arresting those crazy Santa-strippers, not harassing us. I was a World War I veteran, god damn it!" [ADI]

**(HOLIDAY continued from page 12)**

dancing music is Big John Green's "WE WANT TO SEE SANTA DO THE MAMBO!" (1954). Not to be outdone by the Fat Boy, Billy May recorded "RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REIN-DEER MAMBO" (1954)—1954 seemed to be a good year for the Mambo.

Okay, fill in the blank: The dance craze of the very early sixties was the \_\_\_\_\_? If you answered "The Twist" then you are: A) a dance craze historian, B) a Chubby Checker fan, C) cheated and read the next sentence before answering the question, or D) yes, face it, you are over 30! So what could be more fun than seeing Santa do the twist, as George Jones relates in "MY MOM AND SANTA CLAUS" (1962). Don't stop those hips yet! The Marcel's will have your motor running right through Christmas Eve with "MERRY TWIST'MAS" (1961). Hey, and the holiday fun doesn't stop there. For you swingers out there "DIG THAT CRAZY SANTA CLAUS" by Oscar McLollie and his Honey Jumpers will keep you moving around the floor (careful on those dips!--or with those dips). Rounding out this tribute to "Movin' Claus" is Kathy Sharpe's "NORTH POLE ROCK & ROLL" (1958).

Time to slow things down, let's hope we don't bring it to a screeching halt. When the late trumpet

master, Miles Davis, was pressured by Columbia to contribute a tune to the upcoming "Jingle Bell Jazz" album, he collaborated with lyricist/singer Bob Dorough and came up (or down) with "BLUE XMAS (TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN)" (1958). Not to be confused with Elvis' "Blue Christmas," "Blue Xmas" is a true Miles twist on the Christmas spirit.

Songs poking fun at the commercial side of the holidays include Stan Freberg's "GREEN CHRISTMAS (1958), an ironic/funny look at how removed we have become from the original meaning of Christmas. This tune is all the more ironic when you find out how many commercials are in Freberg's background. Professor Tom Leher teaches us to laugh at ourselves for letting the commercialism of Christmas get the better of us in his satirical "A CHRISTMAS CAROL" (1954).

Before we finish our list we can't forget to thank all the little people who help make Santa's yearly trip a reality. . . so to speak. Rudolph got a lot of press and is immortalized in his self-titled hit and another biggie, "Run, Run, Rudolph." But there are other reindeer having a great time doin' the "REINDEER BOOGIE" (1953) in Hank Snow's bouncin' tune. The

**(HOLIDAY cont. page 17)**

**(HOLIDAY cont. from page 16)**

incomparable Tennessee Ernie Ford sings about the King of Santa's elves in "JINGLE - O THE BROWNIE" (1953)—"Brownie" is a term in the South for an elf. How many other elf tunes do you know? And what about a Mrs. Claus song (who happens to be a copyright lawyer from Cincinnati)? So, we send our thanks out to her anyway! (Best to cover all the bases, you know how touchy lawyers can get). Another very important part of Santa coming down your chimney is having a Christmas Tree (which explains why I keep getting shut out every year—guess the ol' fat man doesn't know what to do with a Christmas Cactus). Well, better than having no tree at all is having Benny Martin's "DROOPY LITTLE CHRISTMAS TREE" (1988). To hear just how a living tree becomes a non-living but lovely Christmas Tree take a listen to the sounds of Bob Rivers' "OH CHRISTMAS TREE" (1993). With "Big Dog" on the chainsaw—they tell us that the owls were not harmed. The funniest Christmas Tree song or maybe any holiday song is from "The Man of a Thousand Voices," Mel Blanc: "YAH DAS IST EIN CHRISTMAS TREE" (1953). Everybody join in and try to sing, quack or moo along!

We've covered many of the aspects and emotions of the holidays and we've just scratched the surface. But we're going to wrap it up right here. We'll save the tunes about Xmas Love, and Holiday Loneliness for next year's article. All right, one last and perhaps the best of the "ULTIMATE UNPOPULAR GREAT HOLIDAY TUNES" from none other than Sachmo. Yes, the ambassador of goodwill, Louis Armstrong shows us all what the wonderment of Christmas is all about in "ZAT YOU, SANTA CLAUSE?" (1953). [ADI]

**(WILDHAIR continued from page 14)**

illusionary values. The baseline is the students' lived-experiences, begin from there and move forward.

Rule number two: Be inclusive. Religion (like SES, Gender, Exceptionality, Culture, and Race) is a normal part of the human experience. Any observation should reveal that humans are Religious creatures. After 70 years of official Atheism the Soviets weren't able to erase it. In the West, Television and its attendant shallow pop-culture de-famed it and trivialized it but did not eliminate it in 50 years. And those who say that they don't believe in any religion are in fact practicing the religion of "no-religion." That is, in the end we believe or choose not to believe, not because of "objective scientific inquiry" but because of a gut-level personal decision. We like to think that we're being rational but when push comes to shove the tenor becomes very emotional.

At the same time, it is not the role of the teacher to validate or invalidate a student's religious background (that should be left to the parents, ministers and community of the students). But when studying the culture of a given area, the religion of that area should be evenly dealt with as an on-going expression of the beliefs of those people. Things need to be kept in context. Beliefs: religious, cultural, racial, gender; were not developed in a vacuum. Thus, they cannot be taught in a vacuum nor can the background that generated these beliefs be adequately taught without including the beliefs. Truthfully, Religion and Culture are incestuous siblings. You cannot appropriate one without the other. To toss them into their own separate Kantian boxes lessens their viability and results in an incomplete picture of that Reality.

Rule number three: Don't water down the content because "we're dealing with children here" (or minorities, or, God forbid, children of minorities). Context, complexity, connections and enthusiasm on the part of the teacher goes a long way toward making a potentially controversial subject approachable and appreciated. The students themselves will weed out what they can grasp and appropriate. We rob them of that process when we try to make things "palatable." The only thing that results are boring lessons that seem disconnected and do no justice to the subject being taught. To bad Marx can't put *that* in his pipe and smoke it. [ADI]

**(LEGACY from page 5)**

We were not an "overly" religious family. And while we knew and respected the purpose of the holiday, we didn't focus on the birth of Jesus as the whole reason for the holiday. But there always seemed to be a "Spiritual-ness" to the season. There was a strong sense of family. Don't get me wrong. I'm not trying to say I had a picture perfect childhood. In the decade where "dysfunctional" is the buzzword, I must say my family was as "dysfunctional" as the next (we even had to add a closet for all the skeletons). But through it all, my family was quite close. During this spiritual time of the year we had the gift of love. And knowing that we had each other was more than "just enough"—it was everything. My father used to say, "I may not have much money, but "I'm the richest man in the world."

I suppose the Christmas legacy that is mine to pass on to my sons is not tangible, but then neither is love, or joy, or caring. It's this "spirit" of Christmas that I hold on to. In spite of my family's low income (or perhaps because of it), I looked beyond the quantity of presents. In fact, I would say the Christmases that stand out most in my memory do not involve any particular gift I *received* but special gifts that I *gave*. When I was about 9 or 10, I wrote and

illustrated a story about a hippo. I bound it with yarn and wrapped it up as a present for my dad. I was so anxious for Christmas day to arrive so he could unwrap my special gift to him.

And on another Christmas when times weren't as rough, my memory is still of what I gave. My dad gave each of us kids \$20, he said we could keep it or spend it on presents for each other. There was no pressure or expectations but for us kids there was no question. We went to the B&B drug store behind our house and went shopping for each other! Not one penny was spent on ourselves nor was any money left for ourselves. I remember how happy I felt to be playing Santa Claus (I bought my sister a hairbrush that year).

To this day my true delight comes in the giving (and I don't even need three spirits to visit me in the wee hours of the morning—"Little Mike, go back to bed!"). So it would be easy to just give and give to my sons but what value would this hold? As the toys are outgrown (or more likely, broken), they would miss the point. No, I think I will pass on that legacy (minus the financial hardships and a few skeletons). They will learn that it is in the giving that we all receive and find the true joy of the season. **[ADJ]**

**(BRIFF cont. from page 4)**

"Briff come on, we're running late," he said. He couldn't understand why it was taking Briff so long to get ready to go to work. When Briff reached the front door, his father asked why he still didn't have his boots on. He said, "Listen young man, you'd better get up earlier if you're going to go to work with me. Do you understand me?"

Briff sputtered and stammered about dinner but his father continued, "I'm not going to wait around all morning for you to lace up your boots. You'd better get up early if you're going to go to work with me. You'd better get up if you're going to go to work with me. Hello, little guy. Is anyone home?"

Briff didn't understand what his father was trying to say in the dream. As he lay in his bed he felt a tug and heard voices but pulled his covers up tighter around himself. Then the voices stopped and the stillness returned. Briff smiled and thought about plastic army men and tiny green boots.

====\*\*\*====

**A narrow** shaft of morning light slowly marched across the motionless bedroom.

**(BRIFF cont. page 19)**

**(BRIFF continued from page 18)**

Like a nervous messenger peering back over its shoulder as it went along, the thin beam crept from a crack in the window shade to a pile of blankets that marked one of the beds. But just as the shaft was becoming more confident in itself, picking up the pace of its march, it stumbled through a small opening in Briff's blanket and landed with an "Ugh!" on the young boy's closed eyes and nose. In the sudden burst of light Briff woke with a start and yelled, "What am I doing sleeping?! I'm suppose to spend the week with my dad and go to work with him!" Something grunted and a pile of blankets jostled away from Briff. Briff leapt from his bed to the window of his upstairs bedroom and saw that his father's truck was still warming up in the driveway. He trampled the army men and plastic cars in a mad rush to reach his father before he left.

Briff's father lovingly ran his big fingers through the little boy's light brown hair. "I thought I told you that you had to get up early if you wanted to go with me. I'm running late," his father said. Placing his huge palm on top of Briff's head he added, "Your mother wants you to stick around the house today. I think she has something planned for you."

Briff tried to not frown but the lips on his little face drew long and down and his lower lip began to tremble. "Hey, you'll come with me later." He hesitated. "Right now, I need you to help your mother keep an eye on your brother and sister. I know that Dapnon and Layla aren't nearly

as much fun as backhoes and square-edged shovels but someone's gotta do the work out here while I go to the job site and play." Briff's eyes reddened slightly. "Whoa, tell you what, I'll try to come by tonight and I'll let you help me unlace my boots." He effortlessly lifted the young boy off his feet and Briff clutched his father's neck.

"Besides," his dad needlessly added, "going out to the ol' job site is not exactly the best way to begin your Christmas vacation. So, while I'm out 'slavin' with the backhoes I want you

to go out and have some fun for me today. And see if you can't help your little brother find those lost army men."

Briff didn't want to let go of his father's neck. He wanted so badly to be with his father and to be done with his days as the backup-babysitter. After a moment he sighed and released his father's neck and the big man gently set him back on the ground. They looked at each other just for a moment. Then Briff hugged his dad's leg and

trodded back to the house.

When he got to the front door he suddenly realized that he was still wearing his bunny slippers. "What a silly little boy I am," he thought to himself.

**NEXT ISSUE: CHAPTER TWO - "DAPNON'S SONG" [ADJ]**

*When Briff reached the front door, his father asked why he still didn't have his boots on. He said, "Listen young man, you'd better get up earlier if you're going to go to work with me. Do you understand me?" Briff spluttered and stammered about dinner but his father continued, "I'm not going to wait around all morning for you to lace up your boots. You'd better get up early if you're going to go to work with me."*

**(CANCER continued from page 8)**

getting something, anything on paper every day; you hear the clock ticking, you smell the fat stogie clenched by the editor coming down the hall to tell you your time's about up.

Cancer forces me, as a writer, to look at life as a constant rewrite, not just some foofy work of art to be danced around nervously. And any decent author knows first drafts are almost always crap. Classic literature is born in the act of revision.

When confronting the possibility of one's own untimely demise, it's nearly impossible not to wax philosophical. I'm calling these months my "Yoda phase." Every abstract thought I capture seems profound, as rich and fulfilling as Swiss chocolate. While living with the diagnosis is still in the process of sinking in, my life has taken a turn for the better, thanks to a few of the lessons that have sunk in over the past several weeks:

- ▶ *Don't sweat the small stuff.* No one lives long enough to perfect another human being. Instead, celebrate the differences. Find the humor. Leave the room. Hang on just a little longer, because you'll never regret it.
- ▶ *Youth is wasted on the young; hindsight is wasted on the old.* It's truly a gift to receive a wake-up call at the tender (yet responsible) age of 35; to be asked, "If you ha just six months or six years left on this earth, would you be doing exactly what you're doing now?" It's curtailed a lot of aimless late-night Windows solitaire games, to say the least.



- ▶ *The quality of this moment is far more important than any goal you can set.* Because the moments themselves comprise the goals automatically, in the long run.
- ▶ *You can endure anything if you break it down into small enough pieces.* For days on end I felt like the subject of a failed knife-thrower, my torso replete with freshly gaping smiley-face incisions that threatened to literally spill my guts if I gave in to the constant nausea. I struggled with IVs that bruised my veins, eyes that wouldn't focus, a head that couldn't think clearly, fear clutching somewhere way in the back of my mind, a hematocrit so low I had to be

transfused blood that chilled my veins and made me shake uncontrollably, and constant nausea that often led to retching for hours on end. During that time, when there was nothing else to look forward to, I would struggle to focus on the clock and think, "It's 12:32. All I have to do is make it to 12:35." And so on. And when I made it, I knew I'd beaten something. I was still in control. That sensation was sanity itself when the going was toughest.

- ▶ *God is deeper than spiritual experiences.* Four years earlier, complications with the delivery of my daughter had brought me near death, and a moving spiritual experience had gotten me through. This time, however, there was no apparition or supernatural

**(CANCER continued on page 21)**

**(CANCER cont. from page 20)**

presence in the room or extra infusion of hope or anything; I was truly walking in the valley of the shadow of death. And this too, I realized a little later, was a gift. I knew I had faced the worst, and God had gotten me through. Not with crutches, but with my own limping feet. And that made me realize how very much He wanted me to be strong enough to beat this thing. With my experience from years ago, I had apparently been in training. He thought I was Rocky. Who was I to argue?

One of my most meaningful lessons I've learned through this experience is what I've come to call "The Five P's of Living With A Threatening Prognosis":

- ▶ **PRAYER.** The first thing I did was call everyone I know who prays. I believe this is where the whole battle begins, because my life is not my own.
- ▶ **PERSPECTIVE.** I soon realized that the first thing I could do to affect my prognosis was alter my attitude. Not only does a healthy lifestyle and peaceful, centered mindset aid the body's physical systems, it affects the quality of the day tremendously.

One of the most common remarks I get from people inquiring after my post-surgery strength is, "And you still have your sense of humor!" As if the mastectomy protocol was written to include amputation of the "humorous." Of course I still have my sense of humor. I'm still me. And if I can find something in this crazy macabre adventure to laugh at, it can't make me cry. Even if it means walking around the house singing "I'll Be Bald By Christmas."

▶ **PROACTIVISM.** The more you know, and the more you act (as opposed to react), the more control you'll have over the disease. I agree with those who study such things and say that this approach boosts your firepower physically, psychologically, and maybe even spiritually.

Sometimes it seems I'm simply playing an elaborate game chicken with a bunch of misguided partying cells. The cancer is barreling down the road aggressively at 60-miles-per-hour, daring me to veer off course. Fine, I say. Two can play that game. I gulp my vitamins, say a prayer, sprinkle a little chemo over my shoulder, scream an in-your-face one-liner, and rush toward it at 70-miles-an-hour.

And you know what? It scares the hell out of the little guys. They don't know how to deal with such medical sacrilege. I can almost see their little feet faltering on the pedals.

▶ **PARTNERSHIP.** Without this one, the other steps are a lot harder. My husband Tony has walked through the fire beside me since the day I was diagnosed. I find myself speaking of how "we're" doing as much as how "I'm" doing. After all, he takes the same megadoses of vitamins (and experiences the same side-effects). He give me my daily injection whenever I need a break from doing it myself. He even offered to shave his head when we found out I'd lose my hair. (For a conservative guy in the business world, that's truly laying down your life).

By my husband's actions and words, I know unequivocally that I'm not alone in this nightmare. That makes the bad days slide by a lot more smoothly, and it makes the good days downright good.

Equally important is having a circle of caring friends who readily take you as you are, day by day, and celebrate life or offer a sympathetic ear. With that kind of support, even terminal patients are, I think,

**(CANCER continued on page 22)**

**(CANCER continued from page 21)**

truly blessed.

- ▶ **PERSEVERANCE.** One of the best pieces of advice I've received from cancer patients and caregivers is to simply accept that there will be good days and bad days, and both are legitimate.

I've found it's a lot like surfing. Some days I can work a full day, cook dinner, watch TV with the family and sneak in a late night reading stories with my pre-schooler. Other days I might crawl out of bed only long enough to fix some weak tea, return business calls, and change the book I'm reading. Rather than beat myself up or get frantic about lost time, I just have to learn to lay low to the surf-board and wait for the next good wave.

I think it's important to pull back and put your own needs first once in a while. Nurturing yourself through the bad days brings the good days on that much sooner. And that's better for everyone in your life.

I'm still new to the idea of learning to live with cancer. Chances are I'll have shed the Yoda perspective by the time my last month-long in-patient chemotherapy session ends, around November of '94. But meanwhile, I'm thankful for the growing up I've done over the past two months. Cancer is like in-laws: here to stay, and a curse or a gift, depending on how you choose to look at it. The way I see it, the biggest gift I can offer you is the opportunity to learn from my experience how to incorporate into your own life the wisdom it's bringing me—before finding it, wrapped and waiting, on your own doorstep.

**[ADI]**

**(SEX cont. from page 11)**

phone company job and Chapman responsibilities, was not entirely available during the week. But other than that it was a wonderful whirlwind.

**October 27, 1993**

**Did** I mention the ex-boyfriend? Nothing to concern myself with, she said. It was just another layer to the story that I was unaware of while we were fondling each other in the parking lot. In the end she was right, but it did make for a certain level of drama when I was confronted by the 6-foot black body-builder who was less than cooperative about having me "associate" with his former girlfriend. Like I had no idea what he might be going through—stupid muscle-head. God, I must have some funky "kick me" sign on my butt.

**November 8, 1993**

**A week** and a half after date number one we had dinner at Spoon's in Tustin and then went to my place. At dinner I'd been talking about music and our stated intention for going back to my place was for me to play guitar for her. Needless to say, I didn't get very far in my "concert" before she'd taken the guitar from me and smothered me with her kisses. I didn't have to go in to work that night, so the rest of the night, up until she left at 4 a.m., was one very long episode of foreplay. *Sigh.*

We were supposed to get together the following Sunday evening for movies, etc. But when she called that afternoon she said that she wanted to cancel out. Something wasn't right. Four nights earlier we couldn't get enough of each other (without actually *doing it*, of course). When I asked her why, she expressed concern about how quickly we'd become sexually involved. Then she dropped the bomb.

She said that she wanted to be celibate. What?! Maybe some part of her wanted to be celibate but she wasn't doing a very good job communicating that to the rest of her person. I was in shock. Ample parts of guilt convinced her to come over (I didn't want to talk about this over the phone).

**(SEX continued on page 23)**

**(SEX continued from page 22)**

Surprisingly enough when she came over our time together was not dominated by talk. Oh, she did explain that her decision was something that she had decided before she met me, when she was still with her previous boyfriend (for reasons that she didn't disclose to me). I wanted to be understanding but the mixed messages were still too overwhelming. I mean we managed to keep our clothes on this time but when she put my hand inside her jean cutoffs I figured it was my responsibility to assist her in any way I could. No, we weren't doing too well if her intention was to stay non-sexual with me.

**Late November 1993**

**Next** time she said. I said to myself that there wouldn't be a next time. My emotions were getting too involved. I was having a hard time separating my feelings from her mixed messages. One fucking date, one fucking kiss and I'm pacing the floor like an expectant husband. Jesus, this sure as hell isn't doing things the McConnell way. Somehow I'd let my emotions mix with my hormones and confused her sweetness with her passion. Needless to say, I was beginning to feel like a fool.

The end came in a moment of mistaken honesty. We had had a Sunday evening picnic on the carpet of my apartment with El Pollo Loco, Sunday night football and Scrabble on the bed. Eventually a healthy amount of petting was added to the Scrabble game (she was beating the shit out of me in the game---I had to do what I could to distract her). After I conceded the game to her and she conceded to the fondling, we held each other and she again brought up the subject of being friends. The funny thing was that in the course of our discussion we seemed to reach a certain level of intimacy which took the sting away from the usual meaning of the word "Friendship."

We rambled on about favor colors, favorite movies, and favorite musicians. You know the deep stuff. When the subject of amusement parks and roller-coasters came up

I relayed the story of my last visit to Magic Mountain. The story involved a woman I'd known since junior high and suddenly the tenor of the evening changed. I was puzzled.

She asked, "If she [the woman in the story] suddenly became available, would you go after her?" I tried to explain that this woman and I had had our time together but my kissing companion's disposition remained grim. Shit. She said something about *this* being the reason we could only be friends. What?! As I walked her to her car (it was time for me to go to work) I asked her if she was mad because I had a past? She just said that she didn't want to get hurt and that it would be better if we just remained/became friends. I told her that I had had a great night with her, but I was having a hard time adjusting to these sudden "climate" changes. She told me to not be mad. But I couldn't believe that this was happening again.

I had been thinking that afternoon when I was leaving Chapman about how I was beginning to integrate my notions of Religion with my life and eventually becoming a person I could feel good about---getting all these disparate issues together. You know, something about becoming enlightened in my old age about the ways of the flesh and the ways of the spirit. And then this 23-year-old cold-cocks me for the second time in as many days. Jesus, I need this like a body-cavity search.

This is so fucking hard for me. Here we were, on the verge of confessions of genuine affection and she bolts for the door at the first sign of "difficulty." And it wasn't even a real difficulty. No wonder she's never been "in love"---she heads for the fucking hills at the first sign of it. I could rationalize the hell out of this situation and wait for her to come back (this being at least the third time that she's demonstrated his lovely tendency to me)---only to have her bolt at the next tinge of love. I can't have this.

It's no longer about sex. It's no longer about social or parental disapproval. It's about the risk of loving. We found ourselves getting

**(SEX continued on page 24)**

**(SEX continued from page 23)**

very attached to each other and whereas some areas slid together, others painful knocked against each other uncomfortable at the unfamiliar contact. "What if . . ." one is apt to question. "What if . . ." one is apt to plead.

There is nothing certain in the affairs of love. It only comes to those who are willing to risk to have it. That she and I would have found ourselves together the past month should be evidence enough that love had no logic or rationale. But then my former-Charlie Brown self had become used to the discomfort of new fallen affection, thus I was not scared away. But she would have none of it. One story and my kissing companion is convinced that our remaining together is going to end with her heart breaking and both of us loathing life. I sure love it when the thought of having a future with me brings someone to thoughts of emotional doom—this is a new low for yours truly. Or rather, in an effort to avoid her emotional Armageddon she would forgo being associated with me in any more meaningful way than as a casual dating partner. She had just been very pretty face in the crowd and now I was getting my heart splattered all over the streets of Tustin and Irvine.

This indeed confirms my suspicions about that lack of logic in love. I would love to blame this one on her youth but I cannot live with the prospect of "blame" itself. If she is indeed right than her youth is in fact a wisdom that I could not divine—to see the emotional wreckage down the road, distant though it may be, and avoiding it by never coming along with me in the first place. Jesus, what was it I was thinking? I mean it began with the thought about how nice it would be to find a mutual attraction with a nice woman, ask her out, and eventually begin a relationship. It makes me wonder if I'm not better being silently attracted to my married friends. Ain't life grand? **[ADI]**